

TESS Forum on Trade,
Environment,
& the SDGs

For inclusive international
cooperation and action on
trade and sustainability

Annual Report 2024



**GENEVA
GRADUATE
INSTITUTE**

INSTITUT DE HAUTES
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TESS

Forum on Trade,
Environment,
& the SDGs

The Forum on Trade, Environment, & the SDGs (TESS) works for a global trading system that effectively addresses global environmental crises and advances the sustainable development goals. To foster inclusive international cooperation and action on trade and sustainability, our activities seek to catalyse inclusive, evidence-based, and solutions-oriented dialogue and policymaking, connect the dots between policy communities, provide thought leadership on priorities and policy options, and inspire governments and stakeholders to take meaningful action. Launched in 2021, TESS is housed at the Geneva Graduate Institute.

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This report reviews how we work for a global trading system that addresses global environmental crises and advances the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*



* TESS work contributes directly and/or indirectly to all 17 SDGs. The eight SDGs listed here are those most directly addressed by our activities.

Message From the Executive Director

Welcome to the TESS Annual Report. In this report, we review our work in 2024 across our thematic areas and share some of our main achievements and impacts.

2024 was a busy year for international trade and environmental governance. A number of major intergovernmental negotiations and summits were convened, but faced a backdrop of rising geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainty. Together, these continue to threaten both economic and environmental cooperation—including on trade and sustainability—and to challenge multilateralism.

While a vast array of stakeholders highlight the desperate need for effective policymaking and inclusive international cooperation to address the planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, and to advance sustainable development, global governance is falling short.

Less than one fifth of UN Sustainable Development Goal targets are on track. 2024 became the warmest year on record and the first to reach a temperature rise of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, the Paris Agreement's lower boundary to avoid a climate catastrophe. Since 1970, there has been a nearly three-quarter decline in wildlife populations, and the destruction of nature poses significant risks to the global economy, impacting many sectors and millions of livelihoods. Annually, up to 23 million metric tonnes of plastic waste enters lakes, rivers, and oceans, and plastic pollution is expected to more than double by 2040. Alongside, there is mounting evidence of the harmful environmental and health impacts of plastics across their life cycle. The need to enhance and sustain effective international cooperation is clear!

Responding to this need, TESS has focused its work on supporting inclusive international cooperation on sustainability and trade, both in International Geneva and beyond. We play a crucial role in facilitating the



incubation of new ideas and solutions, offering a space for informal and solutions-oriented dialogue in a non-negotiating setting, providing behind-the-scenes support, particularly for developing countries, and working to connect the dots between organizations and experts on topics where greater coherence is urgently needed.

A critical challenge that we embrace and which guides our work is to foster ambitious and inclusive cooperation and action around concrete outcomes. A core strength of our work is this commitment to moving ideas into action and working in collaboration with partners, recognizing the value of joint efforts to address complex and interrelated global challenges.

In 2024, TESS celebrated its three year anniversary. We are proud of the results we have achieved since our creation and over the past year.

Throughout 2024, for instance, TESS played a leadership role in sustaining meaningful engagement of WTO members on environment and sustainable development. While the WTO's Thirteenth Ministerial Conference (MC13) in February did not yield an explicit new ministerial commitment to cooperate on issues of environment and climate, the vast majority of WTO members demonstrated they were ready to engage and build cooperation on sustainability and trade at the WTO, including through a range of WTO committees and member-led initiatives. The value of TESS contributions to these positive dynamics in the lead up to and during MC13 has been recognized by a broad diversity of governments.

After MC13, we provided ongoing contributions and support to the work of WTO members in the context of the Committee on Trade and Environment, Dialogue on Plastic Pollution, Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions, and Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform initiative.

During the year, we continued to support the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate in our role as its Secretariat. The coalition's second ministerial meeting in February yielded two key outcomes: the endorsement of a communiqué with a clear call for ambitious commitments on how trade policy and the WTO can support the global response to the climate crisis, as well as a Menu of Voluntary Actions listing eight trade-related actions that ministers intend to draw from to address the climate crisis.

As governments set their sights on crossing the finishing line in the global plastics treaty negotiations, we continued to support the Secretariat function of the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution. At the Fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) in November, for instance, TESS played a lead role in fostering collaboration among a range of delegations, stakeholders, and technical experts that resulted in a joint text proposal on addressing primary plastic production in the treaty, which was backed by more than 100 countries. The proposal contributed to the momentum for the "Stand Up for Ambition" statement delivered in the closing plenary.

In 2024, TESS mobilized a group of leading international experts on agriculture and sustainability tasked with identifying a set of environmentally harmful subsidies for priority action at the international level. The expert group findings are intended to offer guidance to policymakers and to promote informed discussion on possible cooperative action in this area at the WTO, OECD, FAO, G20, and in the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Meanwhile, we released the report of an Expert Group on Trade, Circular Economy, and Sustainable Development convened by TESS in 2023, which identifies 10 considerations to guide the design and implementation of trade-related circular economy policies. The report's findings were presented at the WTO.

In recognition of the thought leadership and the distinct perspective we bring to discussions on trade and sustainability, TESS was invited to speak at or partner for events at key international gatherings throughout the year. Among other high-profile summits, we were present at MC13, the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29), the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP16), and the plastics treaty negotiations (INC-4 and INC 5.1). Alongside the WTO Public Forum, we hosted Geneva Trade Week's opening plenary and launched a compilation featuring 30 articles by a diverse range of leading experts on the state of play in the multilateral trading system and how to put sustainability at the top of the agenda.

Many more examples of our achievements and impact in 2024 are described in this report. These results were realized by working in partnership with more than 200 experts and collaborating with a wide range of governments, international organizations, research centres, and stakeholder groups.

In 2024, TESS deepened its contribution to global trade and sustainability discussions, bridging policy gaps, providing independent, evidence driven analysis, and catalysing critical conversations among diverse stakeholders, all of which are vital for enhanced international trade cooperation on sustainability.

I wish to thank TESS staff for their dedication and energy throughout the year, and their shared commitment to consolidating our role as a leading, trusted actor working to advance sustainability in trade. I also wish to thank our many partners and supporters whose collaboration has been vital to enable us to deliver on our mission.



Carolyn Deere Birkbeck
Founder and Executive Director, TESS

About TESS

OUR VISION

Our vision is a world where the global trading system effectively addresses global environmental crises and advances sustainable development goals.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to foster inclusive international cooperation and action on trade and sustainability.

OUR APPROACH

Based in International Geneva, TESS aims to support the multilateral dialogue, inclusive international cooperation, and policy action necessary to align trade and trade policies with the urgent need for environmental action, sustainable development, and just transitions.

Our activities catalyze inclusive, evidence-based, and solutions-oriented dialogue and policymaking, bridge policy communities, provide thought leadership on policy priorities and options, and inspire meaningful action at the intersection of trade and sustainability.

We add strategic value to existing efforts by fostering collaborations among key actors, stakeholders, and policy communities while integrating a diversity international perspectives and expertise.

In so doing, we actively promote the engagement and representation of developing country voices in international agenda-setting on trade and sustainability

OUR TOOLBOX

We **convene** public briefings, high-level dialogues, expert meetings, and off-the-record informal discussions.

We **inform** and **advise** key stakeholders and government officials on strategic developments and opportunities.

We **curate** and produce policy-relevant analysis and briefings, working with a diverse array of international experts and partners.

We **support** strategic expert groups, collaborative initiatives, and consultations.

HOW WE WORK



Connect

We foster inclusive, solutions-oriented dialogue on trade, environment, and sustainable development.



Incubate

We support action-oriented solutions, catalyze new initiatives, and introduce promising new perspectives and proposals into policy processes.



Inform

We inform by facilitating access to policy-relevant updates, evidence, and analysis in accessible formats and building shared understanding.



Equip

We support governments and stakeholders to monitor and participate effectively in relevant international processes, with a cross-cutting focus on supporting engagement of actors from developing countries.

OUR THEMES AND FOCUS AREAS

Our work is organized around four **core themes**, reflecting the triple planetary crises of climate change, nature loss, and pollution, and a number of specific **policy areas** responding to evolving and emerging policy developments. Alongside, we are engaged in several **initiatives** that respond to strategic policy opportunities, including acting as the Secretariat of the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution and of the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate.

Our **policy areas** include: subsidies and green industrial policies; environmental goods, services, and technologies; trade and finance; and standards and regulations.

* See our results framework in the Annex for an illustration of how we generate impact.

Our four **core themes** are:



CLIMATE CRISIS

Fostering inclusive international cooperation on trade and trade policies to advance climate mitigation and adaptation, climate-resilient development, and fair transitions.

tessforum.org/work/climate-crisis



NATURE, FOOD, AND RESOURCES

Fostering inclusive international cooperation on nature-positive trade and trade policies relevant to biodiversity and sustainability in agriculture, food systems, and use of natural resources.

tessforum.org/work/natural-environment



PLASTIC POLLUTION

Fostering inclusive international cooperation on trade and trade policies to support global efforts to end plastic pollution.

tessforum.org/work/plastic-pollution



CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Fostering inclusive international cooperation on trade and trade policies to enable a circular economy that serves sustainable development priorities and environmental goals.

tessforum.org/work/circular-economy

OUR INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY NETWORK

TESS benefits from the support of a regionally diverse International Advisory Network (IAN) drawn from a broad range of international organizations, stakeholder groups, and research institutions. The IAN supports us through advice on emerging strategic policy developments, research, and collaboration opportunities.

Find out more: tessforum.org/people

OUR STEERING COMMITTEE

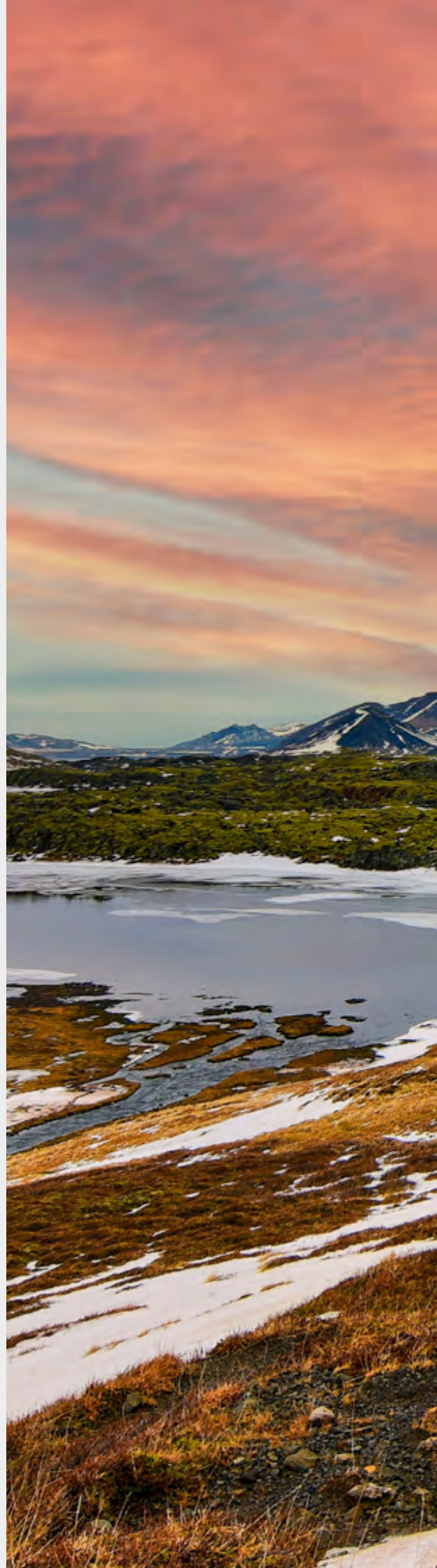
The TESS Steering Committee provides guidance on strategy and priorities. The committee is comprised of eminent representatives from different backgrounds actively working on international trade, environment, and sustainable development.

Find out more: tessforum.org/people

GOVERNANCE

TESS works under the Geneva Graduate Institute's governance and oversight mechanisms, as well as its financial administration, human resources, and oversight systems.

Find out more: tessforum.org/governance





Inclusive International Cooperation and Action on Trade and Sustainability: Review of Key Outcomes and Impact

Contributing to Progress on Sustainability at the World Trade Organization



Ensuring the coherence of trade, environment, and sustainable development policies and legal frameworks is a critical challenge for global governance, requiring enhanced cooperation among governments. There are growing expectations and calls from a diverse range of governments and stakeholders for a more explicit and proactive response at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to global environmental challenges and to wider sustainable development priorities.

Since its creation in 2001, TESS has established itself as a key convener and thought leader on trade, environment, and sustainable development in the multilateral setting, contributing to the mounting momentum on trade and sustainability issues.

We have built a reputation as a neutral, trusted, and credible facilitator that curates timely information and puts forward concrete ideas in multilateral discussions, including in the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE), as well as in the context of the member-led Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD), Dialogue on Plastic Pollution (DPP), and Fossil Fuel Subsidies Reform (FFSR) initiative. We are actively involved in convening and supporting events on trade and sustainability during the WTO Public Forum, WTO Environment Week, and Geneva Trade Week.

Additionally, TESS plays a unique role in supporting regular dialogue on the sustainability agenda at the WTO among delegations at the technical and ambassadorial level, between policymakers, experts, and civil society, and between the trade and environment policy communities.

A specific value-added of TESS is the hands-on engagement and presence of our staff in supporting the day-to-day work of delegations in Geneva to grapple constructively with issues of trade and sustainability. Our reputation as a trusted convener helps forge conversations with a diversity of WTO members and link them to relevant expertise. Given the sensitivity and tensions surrounding trade diplomacy in general, and trade and sustainability specifically, this ability to gather people in off-the-record and informal settings is a core and recognized hallmark of TESS.



TESS has achieved the success of thirty years in the space of three years. Congratulations! Discussions at TESS provide a very safe environment in which to discuss the issues, which we do not get at the WTO. Please continue this fantastic work.

H.E. Mr. Ali Sarfaz Hussain, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the World Trade Organization

Throughout 2024, TESS played a leadership role in sustaining meaningful engagement of WTO members on environment and sustainable development.

While the WTO's Thirteenth Ministerial Conference (MC13)—which took place from 26 February to 2 March 2024 in Abu Dhabi—did not yield an explicit new ministerial commitment on the importance of cooperation on issues of environment and climate, the vast majority of members demonstrated they were ready to engage and build cooperation on sustainability and trade at the WTO.

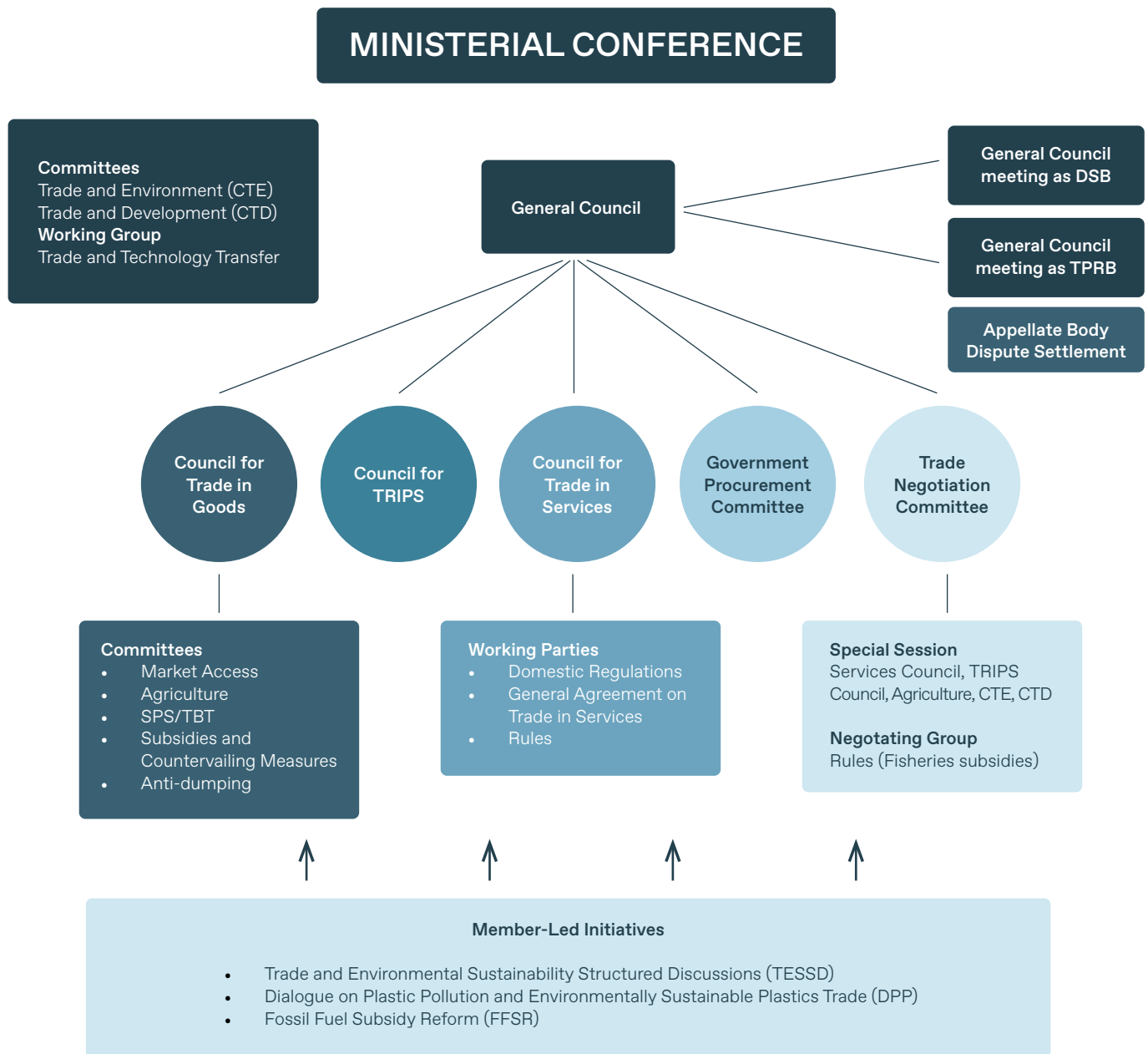
For example, almost 70 developing countries co-sponsored a ministerial declaration on the contribution of the multilateral trading system to tackle environmental challenges. The majority of ministerial statements from individual and regional groupings of WTO members included perspectives and priorities related to environmental challenges, and many explicitly support the revitalization of discussions on these topics in the CTE. Similarly, the three member-led initiatives on issues of trade and environment circulated ministerial statements, updated workplans, and presented a series of reports and outcome documents. The value of TESS contributions to these positive dynamics in the lead up to and during MC13 has been recognized by a broad diversity of WTO members.

Alongside, our work and convening power nourished critical discussions in the WTO on specific options for cooperation on trade and sustainability, and have been noted or taken up by governments in various ways over the past years in a range of WTO committees. For example: findings of the report of an international expert group on circular economy mobilized by TESS (see section on circular economy) were echoed in a suggestion by the facilitators of a TESSD working group on circular economy to develop voluntary guidelines; key take-aways of a TESS policy paper on priority categories for reform of fossil fuel subsidies were presented at a meeting of the FFSR initiative; and specific options put forward by TESS on proposed areas of focus were considered in the three DPP workstreams.

Our work also contributed to the revitalization of the CTE and more inclusive policy dialogue. In 2024, the CTE held thematic sessions on the clean energy transition and on trade-related climate measures. On the latter, TESS is widely acknowledged with helping to foster momentum through our consultations and international legal expert group report. We also provided substantive inputs for a new sustainable agriculture initiative under consideration by members for structured discussions, including a potential workstream on environmentally harmful subsidies, a topic on which TESS has conducted considerable work and is collaborating with a range of external experts to provide inputs into these discussions (see section on sustainable agriculture). TESS publications on sustainable agriculture were cited in the WTO General Council, the organization's highest decision-making body under the ministerial conference.

During the year, we launched a series of ambassadors' roundtables on trade and sustainability, bringing together a diverse group of ambassadors in an informal and off-the-record setting to discuss priorities and opportunities for enhanced cooperation. We continued hosting breakfasts with delegates following environment issues at the WTO, including to support attention to developing country perspectives and priorities on trade and sustainability at the multilateral level.

WTO Bodies Where Trade and Environment Issues Arise



Note: DSB stands for Dispute Settlement Body, TPRB for Trade Policy Review Body, TRIPS for trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights, SPS for sanitary and phytosanitary, and TBT for technical barriers to trade.

Source: TESS. (2024). *Trade and environment at the World Trade Organization: State of play and entry points*. Forum on Trade, Environment, & the SDGs.

Overall, TESS shored up ongoing efforts at the WTO to contribute to global responses to environmental crises while advancing sustainable development priorities. As sustainability issues arise in a range of venues at the WTO, a growing number of members have demonstrated willingness to exchange perspectives, identify pathways for cooperation, and work towards concrete outcomes.

Find out more: tessforum.org/initiatives/tess-at-the-world-trade-organization



“Congratulations to your team for the fantastic job you have been doing over the last three years in bringing us together—member states, civil society, business—to consider these vital issues. There is no solution to the climate crisis or to loss of biodiversity without enabling action through trade policy. That action can only be collaborative between member states, civil society, and international organizations. Thank you for everything that you have been doing to enable that action. Now is the time to move from vision and discussion to action.”

H.E. Mr. Simon Manley, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva

Cultivating Coherence and Inclusive Collaboration on Climate, Trade, and Sustainable Development



The absence of coherent and collaborative approaches to the nexus of climate, trade, and sustainable development undermines efforts to respond to the climate crisis at the speed and scale required. International tensions over trade are already complicating climate cooperation. For this reason, promoting greater coherence and cooperation on climate and trade is a core purpose of our thematic work on the climate crisis.

Supporting the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate

Having played a key role in its creation in 2023, TESS was nominated to act as the Secretariat of the coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate in early 2024. The coalition brings together more than 60 ministers from different regions and varying levels of development, climate vulnerabilities, and trade circumstances to foster inclusive international cooperation at the nexus of climate, trade, and sustainable development.

Co-led by the trade ministers of Ecuador, the European Union, Kenya, and New Zealand, the coalition is in a unique position to drive a positive trade contribution to the global climate agenda and to advance ministerial-level political dialogue.



In my diplomatic career, I have encountered few individuals with the enthusiasm, commitment, and dedication of Dr. Carolyn Deere Birkbeck and her team at TESS. They are a first-rate ally in initiatives focused on trade and the environment at the WTO. The work of TESS has been creative and substantive, demonstrating her deep understanding of the political, social, and regulatory factors at the intersection of the environmental agenda and the multilateral trading system. A concrete aspect that has greatly impressed me is the ability to foster dialogue among diplomatic decision-makers on trade-environment issues. TESS consistently gains access to relevant actors, creates opportunities for them to meet and debate, and ensures that ideas are shaped into the goals that engage them.

H.E. Mr. José Valencia, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the World Trade Organization and other international economic organizations in Geneva

Throughout 2024, TESS was active through its Secretariat role in providing technical support for coalition outcomes and facilitating coalition meetings, consultations, and outreach.

In February, in the margins of MC13, the coalition convened its second ministerial meeting, bringing together all coalition ministers for the first time. The meeting yielded two key outcomes: the endorsement of a communiqué with a clear message calling on the WTO to pursue ambitious commitments in support of the global response to the climate crisis, as well as a Menu of Voluntary Actions listing eight trade-related actions at the ministerial level, which ministers intend to draw from individually and collectively to address the climate crisis.

Advancing one of its key principles—enhanced engagement with ministers working on climate, environment, finance, and development—the coalition convened a ministerial-level roundtable on trade, climate, and finance during the World Economic Forum’s Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland. The roundtable brought together a mix of ministers of trade, climate, and finance and also welcomed heads of the WTO, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and UN Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Finally, in November, TESS helped ensure the coalition’s presence alongside the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku, Azerbaijan. The coalition hosted a public event with senior leaders from international and stakeholder organizations, providing an opportunity to hear from a diverse set of climate community policymakers on trade-related actions and collaborations that can advance climate goals and support inclusive cooperation on trade, climate, and sustainable development.

Find out more: tessforum.org/initiatives/coalition-of-trade-ministers-on-climate

Coalition ministers at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum – 17 January 2024, Davos, Switzerland





Second ministerial meeting of the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate – 25 February 2024, Abu Dhabi, UAE

“

Many thanks for getting me to write this paper! It certainly pushed me to learn about trade and climate change—just in time as the momentum was growing in this direction. As a result, I have now made so many presentations including as keynote speaker for UNCTAD and the African International Economic Law Network and on a platform with the Afreximbank speaking to the COP delegates.

Prof. Faizel Ismail, Director of the Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, University of Cape Town

Facilitating the Inclusion of Developing Country Perspectives

An essential requirement for greater coherence across climate and trade policymaking is the inclusion of developing country perspectives, including on positive agendas for international cooperation that can enable them to achieve climate-resilient and sustainable development.

In 2024, our efforts to facilitate the engagement of developing countries on the nexus of trade, climate, and sustainable development included providing formal and informal settings for delegations and stakeholders to exchange views, build shared understandings, and review opportunities to shape the agenda for international deliberations. These activities fed into a dynamic whereby a growing number of developing countries are demonstrating their engagement and interest in substantive discussions on trade, climate, and sustainable development priorities in multilateral settings, be it at the WTO or in the UN climate negotiations.

In late 2024, TESS launched two new initiatives as part of our work to support developing countries in their trade and climate policymaking and diplomacy. The first is a partnership designed to assist developing countries devise national strategies and advance priorities at the nexus of trade, climate, and sustainable development. The second is a series of sectoral briefing notes commissioned by TESS and written by experts looking at trade and climate scenarios in key sectors on the road to net zero and their implications for developing countries and climate-resilient development. The briefing notes are published in collaboration with leading international experts and partner institutions, recognizing the value of joint efforts in addressing the complex challenges and opportunities that climate and trade policies present for developing countries.

Find out more: tessforum.org/work/climate-crisis

Supporting Negotiations for an Ambitious Global Plastics Treaty



In March 2022, UN member countries agreed on a resolution to launch negotiations on an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. Realizing the ambition of a new international treaty to end plastic pollution calls for attention to how we can harness international economic cooperation to transform the plastics economy, support a just transition to sustainability, and foster new economic opportunities, especially for developing countries. TESS has supported the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) since it began its work in the second half of 2022.

In 2024, as governments set their sights on crossing the finishing line at INC-4 in Ottawa in April and INC-5.1 in Busan in November, we continued, as part of its Secretariat function, to support the work of the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution (HAC), while fostering efforts to mobilize an even wider group of countries in favour of an effective, ambitious treaty.

We also supported the treaty process through a set of events, informal expert working groups, information documents developed with technical experts, and consultations focused on fostering convergence on several indispensable, but challenging, elements of the negotiations—primary plastic polymers, plastic products and chemicals of concern in plastics, and financing—as well as the operationalization of the protection of human health from the adverse impacts of plastic pollution as a core objective for the treaty.

Working with a range of INC delegations, stakeholders, and technical experts, TESS played a key role in supporting collaboration that resulted in a joint text proposal on sustainable production, including setting a global target for primary polymer production, which was supported by more than 100 countries in the final days of INC-5.1. This proposal demonstrated the collective commitment of an ambitious majority in the INC and contributed to the momentum for the “Stand Up for Ambition” statement, which was delivered in the closing plenary.

Find out more: tessforum.org/initiatives/tess-and-the-global-plastics-treaty-negotiations



The Cook Islands is a member of the High Ambition Coalition and we have been very fortunate to engage with the wonderful team at TESS. Their professionalism, agility, breadth of knowledge, and sound technical advice have established clear grounds for us as a small island developing state to effectively perform our duties as negotiators in the plastics treaty. We thank TESS for their continued contributions in supporting member states during the treaty negotiations.

Halatola Fua, Director, National Environment Service, Cook Islands (INC Focal Point)



We deeply appreciate the TESS team's invaluable contribution to the plastics treaty negotiations, both to the High Ambition Coalition and its member states. Crafting a global treaty requires a well-informed approach, and TESS has been instrumental in helping us navigate key issues and advocate for a strong, ambitious agreement.

Juliet Kabera, Head of Delegation, Rwanda, Co-Chair of the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution



Switzerland values the important role that TESS plays in the INC negotiation process, in particular through its coordination work in the High Ambition Coalition and through targeted technical contributions. TESS's expertise, professionalism, and commitment have been instrumental in fostering informed and constructive discussions and in supporting delegations in shaping an effective treaty to end plastic pollution

Andrea Zbinden, Senior Policy Advisor, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (INC Focal Point)



HAC coordination meeting – 30 November 2024, Busan, Republic of Korea



HAC informal dinner – 23 November 2024, Busan, Republic of Korea



As one of the coordinators of the DPP initiative at the WTO, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to TESS, which has played an indispensable role in the preparation and development of the DPP, from its launch to its current success, co-sponsored by 83 WTO members, covering more than 85% of global plastics trade.

Xiaohui ZHANG, First Secretary,
Permanent Mission of China to the
World Trade Organization



TESS stands apart in its ability to convene and engage governments and stakeholders around opportunities for cooperation. In the global plastics treaty negotiations, this has produced concrete results on some of the most delicate issues, including plastic production and finance. This is in addition to the steady production of highly informative and influential publications, which are required reading in these spaces.

Tim Grabel, Senior Lawyer & Policy
Advisor, Environmental Investigation
Agency

Throughout 2024, TESS further supported the work of the INC by promoting cooperation on where and how trade and trade-related policies can support international efforts to tackle plastic pollution. We continued our active engagement in supporting the efforts of the co-facilitators and WTO members involved in the DPP, including by providing suggestions for the MC13 statement and inputs on proposed areas of focus in the three workstreams of the DPP 2024 work plan. In so doing, we emphasized that the statement's focus on making progress towards "concrete, pragmatic and effective outcomes" by MC14 will require that the format and agenda of meetings, presentations, and other work under the three workstreams are designed specifically to foster such outcomes. Finally, to raise awareness about the DPP's work, we hosted a public event alongside INC-4, highlighting opportunities for cooperation on trade and plastic pollution.

Find out more: tessforum.org/work/plastic-pollution

Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and a Nature-Positive Trading System



Advancing Discussions on Trade and Sustainable Agriculture

There is growing recognition of the need for international cooperation on trade and trade policies to support sustainability in agricultural production and trade and promoting sustainable food systems globally. A unique TESS contribution in discussions on trade and agriculture is our engagement with a diverse group of countries from the perspective of sustainability priorities, which is not the framing normally used in agricultural trade negotiations. These efforts are filling a significant gap in identifying trade policy solutions at the international level to help drive sustainable agriculture and food systems.

Government subsidies to agriculture are a critical topic for attention given their impact on production and consumption patterns and the environment. The need to tackle the environmental impact of agricultural subsidies has been reaffirmed at the highest political level globally. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) calls for addressing subsidies harmful to biodiversity and reducing them by at least \$500 billion per year by 2030. At the WTO, several members have emphasized the need to address the sustainability dimension of agriculture. However, among the range of issues for discussion, defining what clearly constitutes environmentally harmful agricultural subsidies involves considerable conceptual and technical difficulties.

As a contribution to dialogues on these topics, in 2024 TESS mobilized a group of leading experts on agriculture and sustainability from academia, think tanks, intergovernmental organizations, and stakeholder organizations representing a diversity of geographical origins and perspectives. This expert group was tasked with identifying a set of environmentally harmful subsidies for priority action at the international level.

To inform this work, we hosted jointly with UNEP a full day deep dive to explore possible approaches and pathways to address environmentally harmful agricultural subsidies, bringing together government officials from developed and developing countries with leading experts from international organizations, academia, and think tanks. A final report synthesizing the group discussions will be released in 2025. The findings of the expert group are intended as guidance to policymakers and to serve as a basis to promote open discussion on possible cooperative action in this area at the WTO, OECD, FAO, G20, and in the context of the KMGBF.

Alongside, we seized ongoing opportunities to highlight the importance of this issue, including through submission of a T20 Brazil policy brief to contribute to the G20 international task force on trade and investment for sustainable and inclusive growth. In partnership with the governments of Australia and New Zealand, we also co-hosted a WTO Public Forum session on the same topic.

Find out more: tessforum.org/initiatives/expert-group-on-environmentally-harmful-agriculture-subsidies



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The expert group report on environmentally harmful subsidies is well structured, comprehensive, and thought-provoking. It has given me ideas for policy work we are currently undertaking in Africa to create enabling conditions for landscape restoration.

Helen Ding, Senior Economist for Inclusive Development and Global Lead for Landscape Restoration Economics, World Resources Institute

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TESS has contributed to dialogue between trade diplomats, academia, and the environment community. Its research and publications have been a valuable resource for Brazil's initiative on sustainable agriculture within the multilateral trading system. I look forward to continuing this engagement as discussions on this topic progress in Geneva.

Diego Alfieri, Secretary, Permanent Mission of Brazil to the World Trade Organization

Fostering a Nature-Positive Trading System

The adoption of the KMGBF has spurred discussions in multilateral settings on the role that cooperation on trade and trade policy can play in supporting implementation of the framework and how to foster synergies between nature-positive trade and sustainable development priorities. More broadly, the role that trade and trade-related policies can play in both driving and responding to the biodiversity crisis is increasingly recognized. A priority in this regard is to develop and promote a more systemic vision and agenda for a nature-positive trading system where trade rules and policies proactively support environmental outcomes and acknowledge the dependence of economic activity and sustainable development on nature.

To advance such thinking, we co-hosted a brainstorming meeting with NatureFinance and UNEP bringing together expertise from across policy communities to explore the role of trade rules in addressing the biodiversity crisis and supporting a global bioeconomy that serves sustainable development. To complement these efforts, during the year we published a series of short views from leading international voices on the nature positive economy, where they highlighted the importance of trade dimensions and also links with nature-positive finance. Connecting the dots between nature and finance, we published a policy brief on *The transition to an economy that values nature*, written by eminent expert Ruth Davis, in which she examined options for reforming financial systems to tilt incentives away from nature's destruction towards its protection, sustainable use, and restoration.

Building on a body of existing TESS work on nature-positive trade, in 2024 we strove to promote an agenda for trade cooperation to protect and restore nature and seize opportunities to support implementation of the KMGBF and sustainable development.

At the 2024 UN Biodiversity Conference (COP16) in Colombia, TESS collaborated with many partners in the organization of the inaugural thematic day on trade and biodiversity. We were also invited to co-organize with UNCTAD and UNEP the opening session of a series of Trade Hub sessions where we focused the attention on connecting the dots and promoting international cooperation for nature-positive trade. Ahead of COP16, at the WTO Trade and Environment Week, we partnered with Colombia, Ecuador, and Australia on a session where participants reviewed priorities and opportunities for trade policies to support global biodiversity and sustainable development goals.

Find out more: tessforum.org/work/natural-environment





TESS plays an important role in the Geneva ecosystem and beyond, ensuring inclusive trade and environment dialogue as well as background analysis on emerging topics of importance for sustainable development.

Chantal Line Carpentier, Head, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)



Fostering a Fair Transition to an Equitable and Inclusive Circular Economy



As interest in the shift to a circular economy grows, there is mounting attention to trade and supply chain dimensions and the relevance of trade policies. To support a fair transition to a more resource-efficient and low carbon circular economy that advances sustainable development, inclusive international cooperation on the trade dimensions will be vital.

To help governments and stakeholders navigate complex priorities, a particular priority is for dialogue and shared understandings on best practices for designing trade-related circular economy policies. These policies should achieve environmental objectives, remain non-discriminatory, minimize trade costs, be effective across interconnected markets, and support sustainable development and a fair transition.

In this regard, in late 2023 TESS mobilized a group of leading international experts from the trade, environment, and sustainable development communities, representing a diversity of perspectives and regional expertise, to develop guidance on best practices and approaches on the trade dimensions of circular economy policies,

with the overarching goal of advancing sustainable development. The group's meetings were complemented by consultations between TESS and key stakeholders, experts, and government delegations on critical issues for consideration.

The expert group report, released in September 2024, identified 10 considerations to guide the design and implementation of trade-related circular economy policies and measures in ways that support advancing sustainable development and inclusive international cooperation on trade and sustainability. The report was presented during one of the sessions of the TESSD informal Working Group on Circular Economy – Circularity and has contributed to informed deliberations on these topics at the WTO and also in other international organizations and processes, including at the OECD, UNCTAD, UNEP, WCO, UNECE, and ISO.

In 2024, our work on circular economy also included co-hosting a roundtable with UNEP on trade, sustainability, and circularity in the textiles sector, bringing together trade delegates from developed and developing countries with leading experts. Recognizing the crucial importance of the textiles sector to many developing countries, the roundtable reviewed the complex set of challenges and issues in relation to emerging trends, initiatives, and regulations to promote a shift to a more circular economy, and explored the importance of cooperation on trade and trade-related aspects of circular economy policies to foster an inclusive and fair transition.

Find out more: tessforum.org/initiatives/expert-group-on-trade-circular-economy-and-sustainable-development



No country can achieve a circular economy in isolation. The global system of trade needs to play an essential role in facilitating the formation and growth of equitable and inclusive circular value chains. The international expert group report presents an excellent synopsis of what needs to be done to rewire the trade system to meet such a goal. It is an extremely valuable resource for both the circular economy policy and trade policy community alike.

Dr. Jack Barrie, Senior Research Fellow, Chatham House

Providing Thought Leadership on Issues of Trade and Sustainability



Addressing global environmental crises such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and plastic pollution requires coherent and collaborative policy approaches across jurisdictions and between policy communities. In this complex policy ecosystem, TESS occupies a unique space in providing thought leadership and guidance on issues of trade, environment, and sustainable development, predominantly on priorities and opportunities for inclusive international cooperation and multilateral collaboration.

Our approach to thought-leadership is multifaceted. It involves convening inclusive dialogues that encourage collaboration among governments and diverse stakeholders, informing policy with accessible, timely, and relevant analysis, incubating action-oriented solutions into policy processes, and equipping governments and stakeholders, particularly from developing countries, for effective participation.



We're strongest when we bring the views of all the constituencies together, especially the most vulnerable and the marginalized. TESS is about inclusion, adding value to the debates, rigorous analytical work, and thought leadership and a genuine desire to do good. From TESS's work on plastics to carbon border measures, TESS has become a critical part of our knowledge engagement ecosystem.

H.E. Matthew Wilson, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations, WTO and other International Organizations in Geneva



In recognition of the distinct value and perspective that we bring to discussions on trade and sustainability, TESS is regularly invited to speak at or partner for events at key international gatherings. In 2024, a series of high-profile global summits offered the chance to address some of the biggest challenges facing nature, people, and planet. We were present at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi in February, the World Health Assembly in Geneva in May, the UN General Assembly in New York in September, the UN Biodiversity Conference in Cali in October, the UN Climate Change Conference in Baku in November, and sessions of the plastics treaty negotiations in Ottawa in April and Busan in November. Alongside each of these processes, we engaged with governments and stakeholders through various activities, stressing the importance of trade-related solutions and inclusive cooperation.

During the year, we were also invited to participate in the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, the 9th Global Review of Aid for Trade in Geneva in June, the WTO Public Forum in September, the WTO Trade and Environment Week in October, and at numerous events hosted by a range of organizations and networks, including the OECD, UNCTAD, UNEP, and the Geneva Environment Network.

Alongside the WTO Public Forum, we collaborated with Geneva Trade Week to host the opening plenary, inviting Geneva-based ambassadors and international experts to share their views on pragmatic options and unconventional ideas on ways forward for international cooperation on trade, climate, and sustainable development at the WTO. We hosted a cocktail reception where we celebrated our three-year anniversary and launched a compilation of expert views on reviving multilateralism (see Spotlight). We also held our annual stakeholder breakfast roundtable on climate and trade, attended by leading experts from around the world, providing a space to discuss opportunities and priorities for trade cooperation to support the global climate agenda. At the roundtable, we announced a future Synergies series of expert views on how the trading system can contribute to addressing the climate crisis and supporting climate-resilient development.



In just a few years, TESS has become a pivotal platform for fostering dialogue and expertise among stakeholders in Geneva, and far beyond, on the nexus between trade and sustainability. TESS plays a critical role in bridging gaps between trade and environment communities, and does so in an inclusive way. The TESS expert reports respond to key questions from policymakers and other stakeholders, including on principles for trade-related climate measures and on trade-related circular economy policies and measures. At a time when dialogue on trade and sustainability is particularly challenging, the mission of TESS is more vital than ever.

Prof. Dominic Coppens, Professor of International Economy Law, Maastricht University, the Netherlands



Opening session of Geneva Trade Week 2024 – 9 September 2024, Geneva, Switzerland



Stakeholder breakfast roundtable on climate and trade – 12 September 2024, Geneva, Switzerland



Cocktail reception celebrating TESS three-year anniversary – 12 September 2024, Geneva, Switzerland

Raising Awareness Through Digital Marketing

From 25 February to 14 March 2024, TESS ran a digital marketing campaign with the support of a professional marketing agency. The main objective of the campaign was to boost visibility of the importance of inclusive international cooperation on trade and sustainability, and alongside the visibility of TESS.

The campaign, which used various platforms, comprised three distinct phases: (i) focused advertisements targeting policymakers and experts at MC13; (ii) a transition to more general messaging; and (iii) an extended campaign aimed at enhancing awareness.

The campaign brought a lot of eyes to our content, generating over eight million impressions and a huge spike in web traffic acquisition. The results showed that our audience engaged with the content, a strong indicator that we reached and connected with the right people and that our content and messaging resonated with our target audience.



The discussion this afternoon is an example of the sort of the model of discussion that we need to have. We need to be talking to other organizations that are working on these issues more broadly, whether formal intergovernmental or international organizations or informal stakeholder groups. Thank you for arranging the event. The format and discussion were useful and we look forward to continuing to work with TESS.

H.E. Mr. James Baxter, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the World Trade Organization

In 2024, TESS organized 52 policy dialogues and numerous consultations with government officials and stakeholders. We published 15 policy papers and 46 articles by experts on critical and evolving policy issues at the intersection of trade environment, and sustainable development, tailored to the needs of our audiences.



2024 Top Publication Downloads

Policy Papers

1. *Addressing the Climate Technology Gap Through Effective Technology Transfer* by Vicente Paolo Yu
2. *Trade, Circular Economy, and Sustainable Development: Guidance on Approaches and Good Practices for the Design of Trade-Related Circular Economy Policies and Measures* by International Expert Group on Trade, Circular Economy, and Sustainable Development
3. *Principles of International Law Relevant for Consideration in the Design and Implementation of Trade-Related Climate Measures and Policies* by International Legal Expert Group on Trade-Related Climate Measures and Policies
4. *Considerations for Ensuring the Protection of Human Health Through International Cooperation in the Global Plastics Treaty* by TESS
5. *Trade and Environment at the World Trade Organization: State of Play and Entry Points* by TESS
6. *Reviving Multilateralism: From Vision to Action on Trade and Sustainability at the WTO* by TESS
7. *The Transition to an Economy That Values Nature* by Ruth Davis
8. *Options for Trade-Related Cooperation on Problematic and Avoidable Plastics: Building on Existing Experiences with Single-Use Plastics* by Mahesh Sugathan and Carolyn Deere Birkbeck
9. *Standards and Related Initiatives in International Cooperation to End Plastic Pollution: Mapping and State of Play* by Carolyn Deere Birkbeck, Mahesh Sugathan, Sophie Boinnard, Valeria Grekova, and Belinda Cleeland
10. *Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform: Options for Inclusive Collective Action at the World Trade Organization* by Peter Wooders

Synergies Articles

1. *Reshaping WTO Subsidy Rules for a Sustainable Future* by Daniel C. Esty and Elena Cima
2. *Climate and Trade Cooperation After the Thirteenth WTO Ministerial Conference: Quo Vadis?* by David Kleimann, Jodie Keane, and Michai Robertson
3. *Critical Minerals Initiatives for Green Supply Chains: How Multilateralism Can Help* by Henry Gao, Weihuan Zhou, and Victor Crochet
4. *From Tension to Cooperation on Trade-Related Climate Measures: Six Principles to Bolster International Cooperation* by International Legal Expert Group on Trade-Related Climate Measures and Policies
5. *Greening Supply Chains: Sleepwalking Into a New Era of Trade Policy?* by Marion Jansen
6. *Why Delivering a Fisheries Subsidies Agreement Matters for Small Islands* by Matthew Wilson
7. *The Emerging Principle of Common Concern of Humankind and International Trade Regulation* by Thomas Cottier
8. *The IMO Carbon Pricing Mechanism, the Equitable Transition of International Shipping, and WTO Law* by Goran Dominioni
9. *How to Avoid Potential Friction in Future Trade in Climate Technologies* by Brad McDonald and Scott Vaughan
10. *Strong Ministerial Engagement is Needed to Strengthen International Cooperation on Sustainability and Trade* by Carolyn Deere Birkbeck and Christophe Bellmann

* See the Annex for a full list of policy papers and articles published in 2024.

Find out more: tessforum.org/our-work



Spotlight

Reviving Multilateralism With Sustainability at the Top of the Agenda: The TESS Synergies Series



As the WTO marked the 30th anniversary of the Marrakesh Agreement in 2024, TESS invited articles from a diverse group of leading experts for a series titled *Reviving multilateralism: From vision to action on trade and sustainability at the WTO*. With growing attention to matters of environment and sustainable development at the WTO, the series was conceived as an opportunity for constructive reflection on the state of play in the multilateral trading system and how to put sustainability at the top of the agenda.

The articles were published from February to September 2024 as an online series in Synergies, our blog dedicated to promoting inclusive policy dialogue at the intersection of trade, environment, and sustainable development, drawing on perspectives from a range of experts from around the world.

The experts contributing to the series were invited to address the following questions: In light of the immense sustainability concerns confronting the world, what are the areas where action is most needed in the multilateral trading system? What does this imply in terms of agenda-setting processes or reforms that need to be considered at the WTO? What are the opportunities and practical next steps that can be taken to advance action or lay the foundations for such an agenda?

In September, we produced a compilation of the 30 articles published online for the series, bringing together the patchwork of perspectives and topics covered to provide a snapshot of ideas on a variety of issues at the heart of current debates on trade and sustainability.

The compilation was launched at a reception at the Geneva Graduate Institute as part of Geneva Trade Week where we celebrated our three-year anniversary with trade and sustainability colleagues. The articles in the series generated over eight thousand views on our website.



There has been a revival in interest on issues of trade, environment, and sustainability. I have observed with gladness in my heart that more and more TESS activities have been supporting and contributing to the debate at the WTO on these very important issues. The publication on reviving multilateralism that TESS has produced is spectacular. It will help you catch up with the latest discussions and thoughts on the issue of multilateralism, trade, sustainability, environment, and many other issues.

H.E. Mrs. Pimchanok Pitfield, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand to the World Trade Organization and World Intellectual Property Organization.

Find out more: tessforum.org/latest/reviving-multilateralism-from-vision-to-action-on-trade-and-sustainability-at-the-wto

Year in Review

2024 Timeline of Key Activities

- At the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, TESS supports the participation of ministers from the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate in a high-level roundtable. The coalition reaches 60 members.
- TESS and the World Economic Forum publish op-ed by trade ministers from the coalition on breaking silos between trade, climate, and finance communities.
- In partnership with the Geneva Environment Network (GEN), TESS hosts webinar on mobilizing resources and financing for implementing treaty to end plastic pollution.
- TESS contributes to the WTO DPP and TESSD plenary meetings ahead of MC13.

January



- In the margins of MC13 in Abu Dhabi, TESS hosts and participates in events with partners to foster inclusive international cooperation on a trading system that works for sustainability.
- With support from digital marketing agency, wide-ranging campaign targeting policymakers and experts attending MC13 launched to promote sustainability perspectives and thought leadership.
- Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate convenes second ministerial meeting and endorses communiqué and menu of voluntary actions alongside MC13.
- TESS mobilizes and launches group of leading experts on agriculture and sustainability to identify environmentally harmful subsidies for priority action at the international level.
- First 10 articles for series on reviving multilateralism commissioned by TESS are published in Synergies.

February



March



- Extended digital marketing campaign boosts followers and enhances brand awareness with over 8 million impressions.
- Synergies publishes set of expert views reflecting on MC13 outcomes and prospects for advancing issues of trade and sustainability in the multilateral trading system.

July



- In partnership with UNEP and UNCTAD, TESS hosts roundtable on *Trade in minerals critical for the climate transition and the green economy: Developing country perspectives and pathways for international cooperation.*



August

- To support INC intersessional work, TESS publishes briefing note with analysis of member submissions relevant to human health.

September



- At the WTO Public Forum, TESS speaks at a number of sessions and co-organizes with Australia and New Zealand session on addressing environmentally harmful agricultural subsidies.
- TESS hosts the high-level opening plenary of Geneva Trade Week, an annual stakeholder roundtable on trade, climate, and sustainable development, and a reception where we celebrate our three-year anniversary and launch a compilation of expert views on how to put sustainability at the top of the multilateral trading system's agenda.
- Publication of landmark report by International Expert Group on Trade, Circular Economy, and Sustainable Development mobilized by TESS providing guidance on the design of trade-related circular economy policies.
- TESS publishes policy brief on *The transition to an economy that values nature.*

- Publication of policy brief on *Trade and environment at the WTO: State of play and entry points* and briefing note reviewing ministerial declarations, decisions, and statements on trade and sustainability at MC13.
- In partnership with NatureFinance and UNEP, TESS hosts expert brainstorming meeting on nature-positive trade rules for sustainable development.
- TESS launched series of Ambassadors' Roundtables on Trade and Sustainability
- Publication of policy brief on *Fossil fuel subsidy reform: Options for inclusive collective action at the WTO*.
- At INC-4 in Ottawa, TESS works for an ambitious and effective plastics treaty hosting three informal roundtables on key topics for the negotiations and a panel event on opportunities for cooperation on trade and the INC. TESS actively supports the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution (HAC).

April

04

- TESS convenes expert roundtable on green subsidies. In partnership with LeadIT, TESS hosts event on technology co-development for a just climate transition.
- For Biodiversity Day Celebration, TESS moderates GEN high-level event on implementing the biodiversity plan.
- Alongside the World Health Assembly in Geneva, TESS convenes roundtable with partners on how the international health community can support the global response to plastic pollution and the plastics treaty negotiations.
- At a meeting of the FFSR initiative, TESS presents options for collective action addressing the most harmful fossil fuel subsidies.

May

05

- TESS announces partnership on supporting development of trade and climate strategies in developing countries.
- With UNEP, TESS hosts roundtable on circularity in textiles sector and another on fostering cooperation on environmentally harmful agricultural subsidies.
- At the 9th Global Review of Aid for Trade, TESS co-hosts with UNCTAD and WTO session on trade, finance, and investment gaps for NDCs, and organizes session with DPP on developing country needs to tackle plastic pollution.
- TESS hosts roundtable exploring opportunities for cooperation around trade and climate adaptation and resilience.

June

06

October

10

- TESS launches series of sectoral briefing notes on *Trade, climate and net zero pathways: Scenarios and implications for developing countries and climate-resilient development*, followed by the release of briefing notes on carbon markets, fisheries, textiles, heavy industries, and shipping.
- At WTO Trade and Environment Week, TESS co-organizes session hosted by Australia, Colombia, and Ecuador for global trade policies to support biodiversity targets.
- Alongside the UN Biodiversity Conference in Cali, TESS co-organizes with UNCTAD and UNEP opening Trade Hub session on how trade cooperation can support achievement of biodiversity targets and collaborates with partners in the organization of inaugural Trade and Biodiversity Day.

November

11

- Publication of policy brief on *Options for trade-related cooperation on problematic and avoidable plastics*.
- At INC-3, TESS supports the HAC, which issues a Ministerial Joint Statement. TESS participates in meetings organized by UNCTAD and hosts two informal roundtables on financing and means of implementation in the plastics treaty as well as on reduction of primary plastics.
- TESS issues statement at the DPP Pre-Plenary and contributes to TESSD working group meetings.

December

12

- In partnership with Costa Rica, Iceland, New Zealand, and Switzerland, TESS hosts webinar on the main provisions and significance of the newly signed Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability (ACCTS).
- TESS co-publishes with the Shridath Ramphal Centre for International Trade Law, Policy and Services (SRC) a policy brief on an inclusive and sustainable trade agenda for CARICOM.



2024 in Numbers

52

Policy Dialogues



2,255

Participants



15

Policy Papers



46

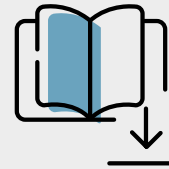
Articles
(Expert Views)

8k+

Publication Downloads

10k+

Article Views



62,460

Website Page Views
(up 92% from 2023)



28k+

New Users



3,540

Newsletter
Subscribers
(up 33% from 2023)



4,464

LinkedIn &
X Followers
(up 50% from 2023)



8m+

LinkedIn & X
Campaign Impressions



116,720

LinkedIn & X
Organic Impressions



Partners and Funders

Our Founding Partners



Launched in 2021, TESS was created through a partnership of the Geneva Graduate Institute and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). At the institute, we are housed at the Geneva Trade Platform within the Centre for Trade and Economic Integration.



Our involvement with TESS reflects the Graduate Institute's long-standing engagement with International Geneva, and our commitment to sustainability as core to the Graduate Institute's vision and mission. TESS is a timely response to the growing interest in revived multilateral cooperation on the critical intersections of trade, environment, and the SDGs and the need for more inclusive global governance.

Marie-Laure Salles, Director, Geneva Graduate Institute



The world faces triple environmental crises of climate, pollution and biodiversity loss. At UNEP, we are delighted to partner with the Graduate Institute to foster multilateral cooperation on the trade and trade policies needed to promote green economies and sustainable development and to phase out unsustainable trade, production and consumption. International agendas on sustainable trade must respond to developing country priorities and advance progress on the SDGs, and will require more interaction between trade and environment policy communities. Based in International Geneva but with a global outlook and advisory network, TESS is designed to respond to these priorities.

Elisa Tonda, Chief, Resources and Markets Branch, Industry and Economy Division, United Nations Environment Programme



Our Funders



TESS is a non-profit initiative financed through grants, contracts, and in-kind contributions from philanthropic donors and governments. TESS gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our work, which included support from UNEP, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the European Climate Foundation, the Minderoo Foundation, the Quadrature Climate Foundation, and the governments of Australia, France, Germany, Norway, and Switzerland.

TESS is independent and does not advocate on behalf of any specific government or stakeholders.

Our Partnerships



TESS works to foster engagement with a diverse range of experts and institutions from all regions, focusing in particular on ensuring representation of developing country voices in international agenda-setting on trade and sustainability. Our various activities are implemented through a variety of partnerships, including events co-hosted with international organizations, governments, stakeholders, universities, research centres, and think tanks based in International Geneva and around the world, and contributing to events and processes convened by others.

Our approach to partnerships is driven by our commitment to supporting inclusive international cooperation on trade and sustainability and building synergies across policy communities and developing a network of complementary expertise.

A core strength of our work is our commitment to moving ideas into action by identifying and working with people and institutions that can be agents of change.

* See the Annex for a list of our 2024 partnerships.



Annexes

Steering Committee Members

Debapriya BHATTACHARYA

*Chair, Southern Voice; Distinguished Fellow,
Centre for Policy Dialogue*

Vanessa EROGBOGBO

*Director, Division of Sustainable and
Inclusive Trade, International Trade Centre*

Bernice LEE

*Hoffmann Distinguished Fellow for
Sustainability, Chatham House*

Etienne OUDOT DE DAINVILLE

*Permanent Mission of France to the
United Nations and other international
organizations in Switzerland*

Joost PAUWELYN

*Professor, International Law; Co-Director,
Centre of Trade and Economic Integration;
Geneva Graduate Institute*

Elisa TONDA

*Chief, Resources and Markets Branch,
Industry and Economy Division, United
Nations Environment Programme*

Matthew WILSON

*Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Barbados to the United Nations, World
Trade Organization and other International
Organizations in Geneva*

2024 Partnerships

TESS involved more than 200 experts from academia, think tanks, and intergovernmental and stakeholder organizations from around the world, including in our dialogues, international expert groups, public events, publications, and expert views.

Across our various activities, we partnered with a diversity of organizations and institutions in 2024 for specific events, joint publications, roundtables, initiatives, or as speakers at their events.

International Organizations

African Minerals Development Center
 Convention on Biological Diversity
 International Renewable Energy Agency
 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
 United Nations Environment Programme
 United Nations Trade and Development
 World Bank
 World Health Organization
 World Trade Organization

Stakeholder Organizations

African Climate Foundation
 Chatham House
 Centre for International Environmental Law
 CGIAR
 Circular Innovation Lab
 Climate Overshoot Commission
 CUTS International
 E3G
 European Climate Foundation
 Geneva Beat Plastic Pollution Dialogues
 Geneva Environment Network
 Geneva Graduate Institute Global Health Centre
 Geneva Platform for Resilient Value Chains
 Geneva Trade Platform
 Global Maritime Forum
 Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
 International Institute for Sustainable Development
 Minderoo Foundation
 NatureFinance
 Nelson Mandela School of Public Policy, University of Cape Town
 Nigerian Institute of Medical Research
 Overseas Development Institute
 Quaker United Nations Office
 Shridath Ramphal Centre for International Trade Law, Policy and Services
 The Pew Charitable Trusts
 Tulip Consulting
 World Economic Forum
 World Resources Institute
 World Wildlife Fund
 Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy

Public and Private Initiatives

Climate Vulnerable Forum
 Forest, Agriculture, and Commodity Trade (FACT) Dialogue
 Leadership Group on Industry Transition (LeadIT)
 Remaking Trade for a Sustainable Future
 Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution (SMEP) Programme
 T20 Brasil

Countries Participating in TESS Policy Dialogues

Government officials and delegates from the following countries attended one or more TESS policy dialogues as speakers or participants.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Albania | Fiji | Peru |
| Algeria | Finland | Philippines |
| Antigua and Barbuda | France | Portugal |
| Argentina | Germany | Qatar |
| Australia | Ghana | Republic of Korea |
| Austria | Guatemala | Russian Federation |
| Bahamas | Guinea | Saint Lucia |
| Bahrain | Haiti | Saint Vincent and the Grenadines |
| Bangladesh | Hungary | Samoa |
| Barbados | India | Saudi Arabia (Kingdom of) |
| Belgium | Indonesia | Senegal |
| Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Israel | Sierra Leone |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | Italy | Singapore |
| Brazil | Jamaica | Slovenia |
| Bulgaria | Japan | South Africa |
| Cabo Verde | Jordan | Spain |
| Cambodia | Kenya | Sri Lanka |
| Cameroon | Lesotho | Sweden |
| Canada | Malaysia | Switzerland |
| Chile | Maldives | Thailand |
| China | Mali | The Gambia |
| Colombia | Mauritius | Timor-Leste |
| Comoros | Monaco | Trinidad and Tobago |
| Congo | Morocco | Türkiye |
| Cook Islands | Myanmar | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Island |
| Costa Rica | Nepal | United Republic of Tanzania |
| Czechia | Netherlands (Kingdom of the) | United States of America |
| Denmark | New Zealand | Uruguay |
| Dominican Republic | Nigeria | Vanuatu |
| Ecuador | Norway | Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) |
| Egypt | Pakistan | Viet Nam |
| El Salvador | Panama | Zambia |
| Estonia | Paraguay | Zimbabwe |
| European Union | | |

2024 Dialogues and Publications

Policy Dialogues

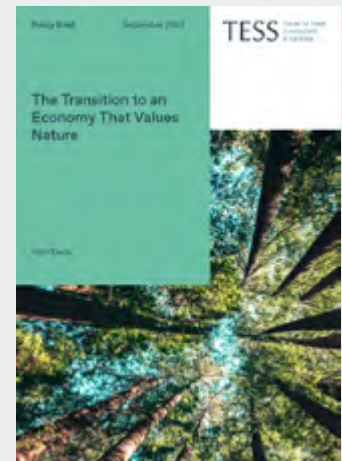
1. *WTO Dialogue on Plastic Pollution (DPP) on the Road to MC13: Fostering Synergies to Support Global, Regional and National Efforts to Address Plastic Pollution* – Geneva (8 January)
2. *Ministerial-Level Dialogue on Trade, Environment, & Finance at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2024* – Davos (17 January)
3. *Third Expert Group Meeting on Trade and Circular Economy* – Online (31 January)
4. *Focal Points Meeting of the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate* – Geneva (2 February)
5. *Implementing a Treaty to End Plastic Pollution: A Holistic Approach to Resource Mobilization & Financing for Systems Change & Just Transitions* – Online (7 February)
6. *Expert Group Meeting on Identifying and Tackling Environmentally Harmful Agriculture Subsidies* – Online (8 February)
7. *High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution Negotiators' Workshop* – Kigali (14-16 February)
8. *Second Ministerial Meeting of the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate* – Abu Dhabi (25 February)
9. *Stakeholder Roundtable on Climate, Trade & Sustainable Development* – Abu Dhabi (26 February)
10. *Informal Dinner for Friends of Sustainability at the WTO* – Abu Dhabi (26 February)
11. *Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate Stakeholder Reception in the Margins of MC13* – Abu Dhabi (27 February)
12. *Fostering Trade-related Cooperation on Plastic Pollution: The Dialogue on Plastic Pollution beyond MC13* – Abu Dhabi (28 February)
13. *Informal Debrief on Sustainable Development & Sustainability at MC13* – Geneva (12 March)
14. *Launch and Panel Discussion on Climate Impacts of Plastics: Global Actions to Stem Climate Change and End Plastic Pollution* – Online (20 March)
15. *Developing Country Breakfast on Trade & Sustainability* – Geneva (16 April)
16. *Ambassador's Roundtable on Trade & Sustainability* – Geneva (18 April)
17. *Brainstorming Roundtable on Nature-Positive Trade Rules for Sustainable Development* – Geneva (18 April)
18. *INC-4 Roundtable on Primary Polymer Production & the Plastics Treaty* – Ottawa (21 April)
19. *INC-4 Roundtable on Financing & Means of Implementation* – Ottawa (22 April)
20. *INC-4 Roundtable on Chemicals & Polymers of Concern* – Ottawa (23 April)
21. *INC-4 Roundtable on Opportunities for Cooperation on Trade and the INC: Insights from the WTO Dialogue on Plastic Pollution* – Ottawa (26 April)
22. *Informal Roundtable on Technology Co-Development for a Just and Equitable Industry Transition: the Next Frontier* – Geneva (6 May)
23. *Green Subsidies, Trade and Sustainable Development: Priorities for Enhanced International Cooperation on Financing Sustainability* – Geneva (7 May)
24. *Expert Group Meeting on Identifying and Tackling Environmentally Harmful Agriculture Subsidies* – Geneva (8 May)
25. *Understanding the Plastics Crisis as a Health Crisis* – Geneva (28 May)
26. *Developing Country Breakfast on Trade & Sustainability* – Geneva (31 May)
27. *Roundtable on Trade, Sustainability, and Circularity in the Textiles Sector: Perspectives on Trade in Second Hand Textiles* – Geneva (3 June)
28. *Ambassadors' Roundtable on Trade & Sustainability* – Geneva (7 June)
29. *Contact Points Meeting of the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate* – Geneva (18 June)
30. *Fostering International Cooperation on Environmentally Harmful Agriculture Subsidies in the International Trading System: A Deep Dive Roundtable* – Geneva (21 June)
31. *Roundtable on Trade, Climate Adaptation and Climate-Resilient Development* – Geneva (25 June)
32. *Aid for Trade Global Review Session: Nationally Determined Contributions 3.0, Trade, Finance, and Investment Gaps* – Geneva (26 June)
33. *Aid for Trade Global Review Session: What do Developing and LDC Members Need to Implement Trade-related Policies to Tackle Plastic Pollution?* – Geneva (28 June)
34. *Expert Contributions on Technical Intersessional Work on Chemicals of Concern* – Online (2 July)

35. *Trade in Minerals Critical for Climate Transitions and the Green Economy: Developing Country Perspectives and Pathways for International Cooperation* – Geneva (12 July)
36. *International Cooperation on Trade, Climate, and Sustainable Development at the WTO: Pragmatic Options & Unconventional Thinking* – Geneva (9 September)
37. *Climate and Trade Breakfast Discussion* – Geneva (12 September)
38. *Addressing Environmentally Harmful Agricultural Subsidies Through the WTO* – Geneva (12 September)
39. *Advancing Inclusive Cooperation on Trade & Climate* – Geneva (12 September)
40. *Ambassadors' Roundtable on Trade & Sustainability* – Geneva (2 October)
41. *Developing Country Breakfast on Trade & Sustainability* – Geneva (4 October)
42. *Nature Positive Trade: Priorities and Opportunities for Cooperation on Emerging Issues* – Geneva (9 October)
43. *High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution Negotiators' Workshop* – Stockholm (9-11 October)
44. *Connecting the Dots: How International Cooperation on Trade and Trade Policies Can Support Action on the Global Biodiversity Framework* – Cali (24 October)
45. *Contact Points Meeting of the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate* – Geneva (30 October)
46. *Ambassadors of the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate Meeting* – Geneva (4 November)
47. *Webinar on the Work of the WTO Dialogue on Plastic Pollution* – Online (6 November)
48. *Trade Meets Climate: Priorities for Collective Trade Action and Cooperation to Achieve Climate Goals?* – Baku (15 November)
49. *Climate, Trade, and Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems: Opportunities for International Cooperation that is Ambitious, Effective and Fair* – Baku (19 November)
50. *Developing Country Breakfast on Trade & Sustainability* – Geneva (9 December)
51. *Climate and Trade COP29 Debrief* – Online (11 December)
52. *Briefing Webinar on the Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability: Towards Enhanced International Cooperation on Trade and Climate* – Online (12 December)



Policy Papers

1. *A Sustainable and Inclusive Trade Agenda for CARICOM* – Jan Yves Remy and Peta-Gay Facey Wilson (20 December)
2. *Heavy Industries – Trade, Climate, and Net Zero Pathways: Scenarios and Implications for Developing Countries and Climate-Resilient Development* – Johanna Lehne (9 December)
3. *Trading Plastics: A Guide to the Development of Trade Policy Strategies and Tools to Address Plastic Pollution* – Mahesh Sugathan (5 December)
4. *Enhancing Sustainability Through Reforming Subsidies for Agriculture* – Christophe Bellmann, Clara Brandi, Umberto Celli, Carolyn Deere Birkbeck, and Peter Draper (28 November)
5. *Textiles and Garments – Trade, Climate, and Net Zero Pathways: Scenarios and Implications for Developing Countries and Climate-Resilient Development* – Patrick Schröder (19 November)
6. *Considerations for Ensuring the Protection of Human Health Through International Cooperation in the Global Plastics Treaty: Building on the Chair’s Third Non-Paper* – TESS (15 November)
7. *Fisheries – Trade, Climate, and Net Zero Pathways: Scenarios and Implications for Developing Countries and Climate-Resilient Development* – U. Rashid Sumaila (12 November)
8. *Carbon Markets – Trade, Climate, and Net Zero Pathways: Scenarios and Implications for Developing Countries and Climate-Resilient Development* – Scott Vaughan (4 October)
9. *The Transition to an Economy That Values Nature* – Ruth Davis (27 September)
10. *Trade, Circular Economy, and Sustainable Development: Guidance on Approaches and Good Practices for the Design of Trade-Related Circular Economy Policies and Measures* – International Expert Group on Trade, Circular Economy, and Sustainable Development (19 September)
11. *Reviving Multilateralism: From Vision to Action on Trade and Sustainability at the WTO* – TESS (ed.) (12 September)
12. *Human Health in the INC Intersessional Work Process: Analysis of Submissions Relevant to Human Health* – TESS (23 August)
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14. *Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform: Options for Inclusive Collective Action at the World Trade Organization* – Peter Wooders (22 April)
15. *Trade and Environment at the World Trade Organization: State of Play and Entry Points* – TESS (5 April)



Synergies

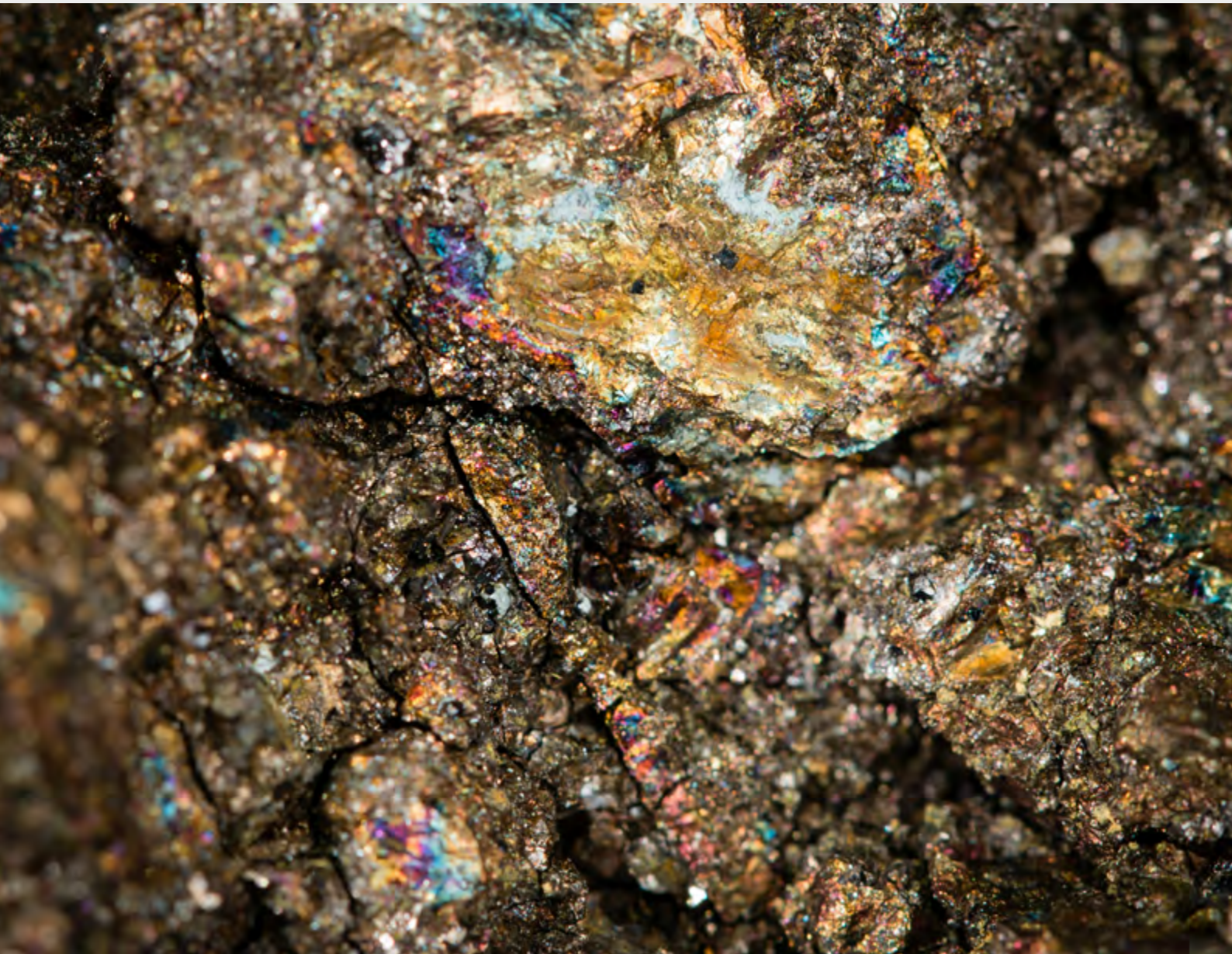
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Synergies Articles

16. *Carbon Copies? Suspicious Patterns of Commercial and Industrial Policy Response by the Behemoths of World Trade* by Simon J. Evenett and Fernando Martin (16 December)
17. *Trading Our Way Out of Plastic Pollution: The Role of Sustainable Substitutes and Alternatives* by Lorenzo Formenti and Henrique Pacini (28 November)
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20. *From Tension to Cooperation on Trade-Related Climate Measures: Six Principles to Bolster International Cooperation* by International Legal Expert Group on Trade-Related Climate Measures and Policies (10 November)
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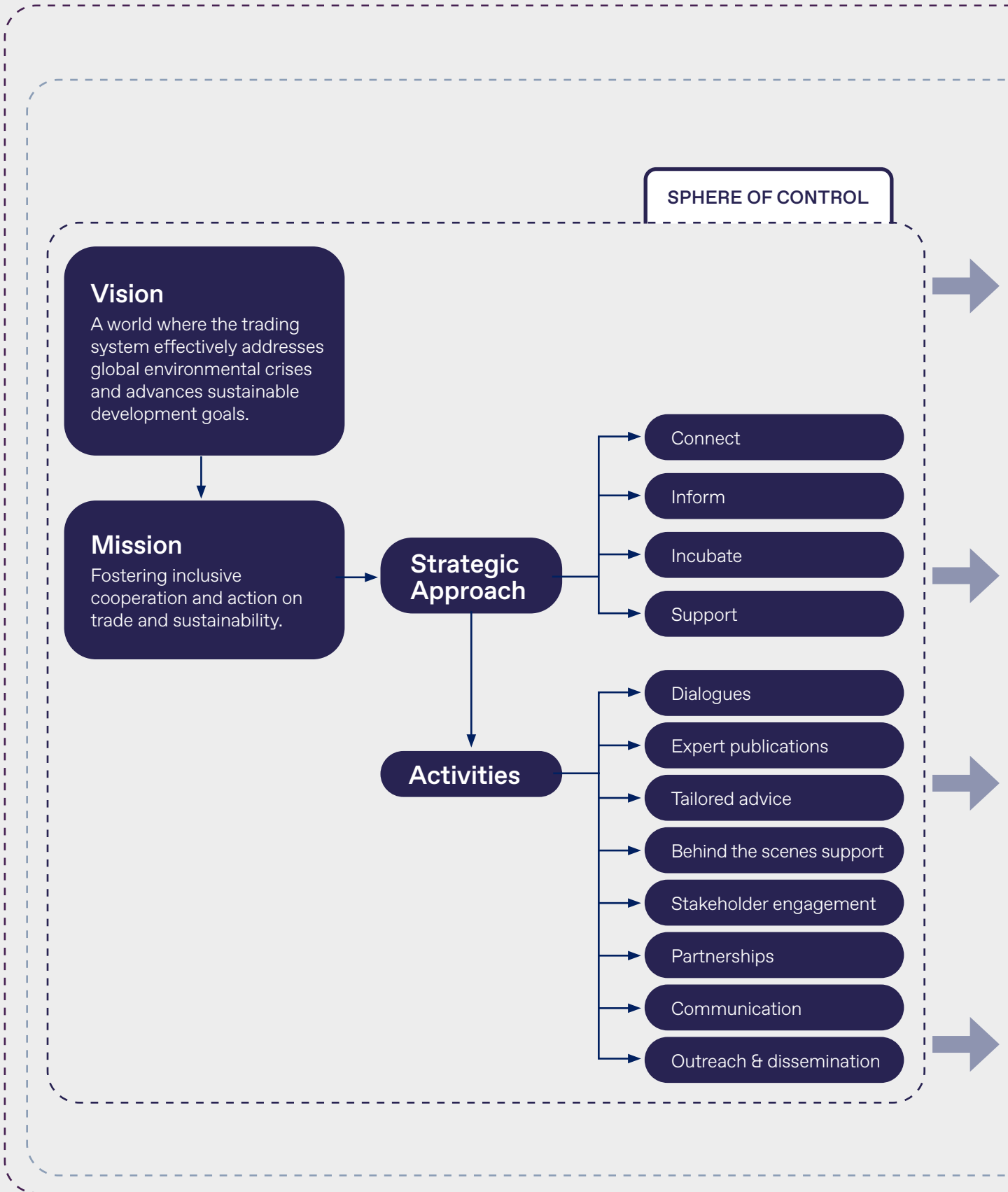


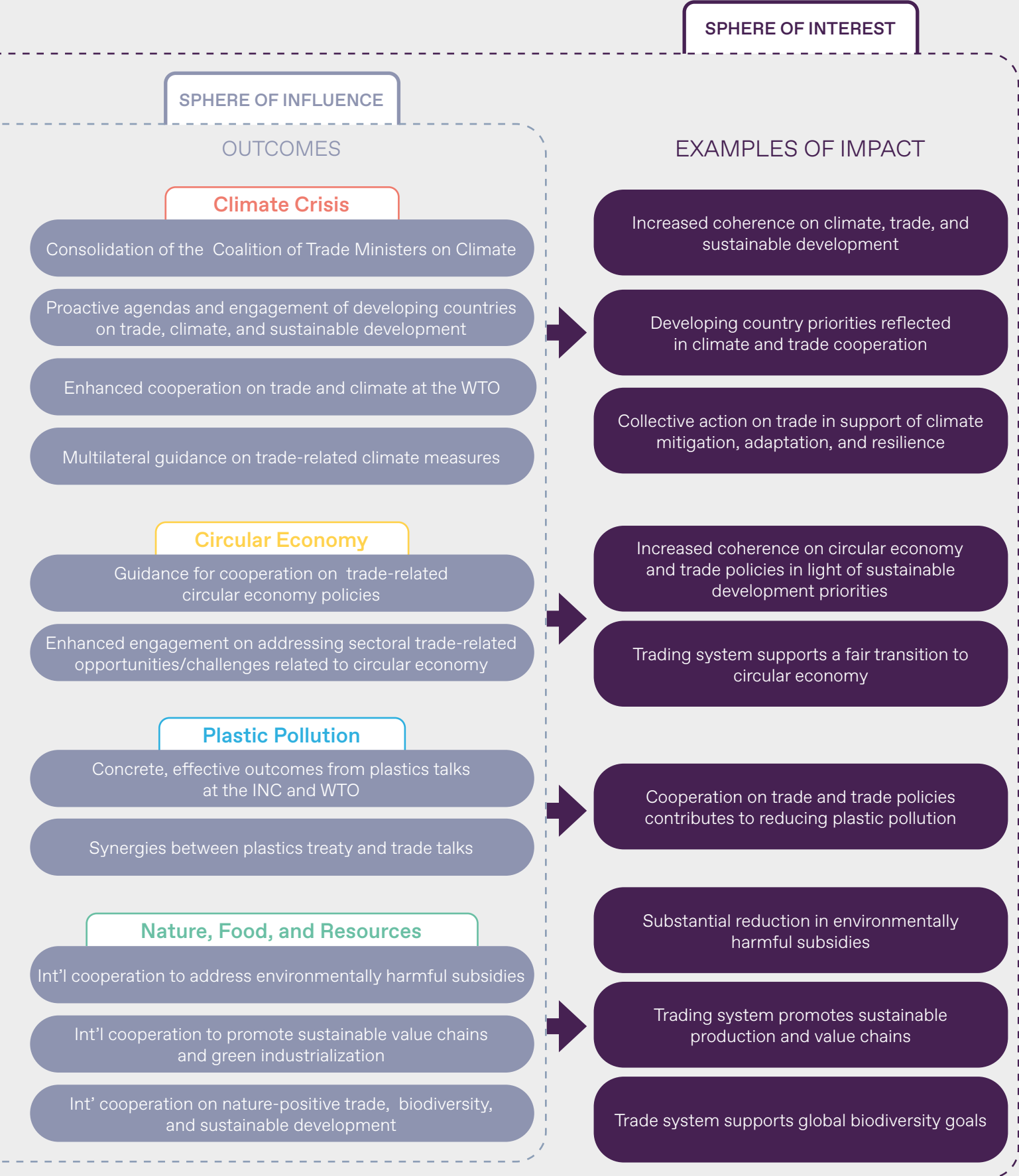
45. *Sustainability at the WTO After MC13: Forging a Proactive Response* by Carolyn Deere Birkbeck and Christophe Bellmann (14 March 2024)
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Results Framework











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